

## **Library 2.011 World-wide Virtual Conference, "The Future of Libraries in the Digital Age", November 2-4, 2011**

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Citation for this version and the definitive version are shown below.

**Citation to Publisher** Wang, Minglu. (2011). Library 2.011 World-wide Virtual Conference, "The Future of Libraries in the Digital Age", November 2-4, 2011. *Library Hi Tech News* 28(10), 1-5.  
**Version:**

**Citation to *this* Version:** Wang, Minglu. (2011). Library 2.011 World-wide Virtual Conference, "The Future of Libraries in the Digital Age", November 2-4, 2011. *Library Hi Tech News* 28(10), 1-5. Retrieved from [doi:10.7282/T3D21VWW](https://doi.org/10.7282/T3D21VWW).

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**Library 2.011 World-wide Virtual Conference, "The Future of Libraries in the Digital Age",  
November 2-4, 2011<sup>1</sup>**

(This is a post-print report published in *Library Hi Tech News*, 28(10), 1-5)

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The Library 2.011 World Wide Virtual Conference: The Future of Libraries in the Digital Age was held online, over three days in multiple time zones from November 2nd to 4th, 2011. The conference was completely free and quite successful according to the following statistics: a total of 150 sessions, 6,800 sign-ups and 9,000 logins from 153 countries were counted during the conference period. In one of the keynote sessions given by Sandra Hirsh, the number of attendants reached 425.

Library 2.0, as a librarians' social network community on Ning currently under Steve Hargadon's leadership, was this conference's organizer, platform, and group of participators. The conference website was Library 2.0's social network site, featuring multiple interactive groups and forums. There were many noticeable unique features of this free virtual international library conference in terms of its organization and implementation, which actually all represented Library 2.0's own spirit of being connected and participatory. All conference proposals were displayed online before and after the acceptance decision, allowing for open searching, browsing and commenting. Conference speakers were asked to sign up as members of the speaker group as well as to communicate with each other before and after the conference. There was also a conference volunteer group with over 100 members and some of them were speakers themselves, who helped moderate all sessions during the conference. The conference sessions were held through Blackboard Collaborate (formally Elluminate). During the sessions while speakers were talking, attendants usually were typing instant responses into the chat box and virtually communicating with each other. Some speakers were taking advantage of white board and polls in addition to the final Q & A session to interact with attendants virtually, and one keynote speaker, Dr. Christine Bruce, even allowed a few minutes for "chat breaks" in between her presentation sections. Session recordings were available online soon after each session was finished (<http://www.library20.com/page/general-session-room-links>). Viewers around the world can now download the slides and chat sessions, and experience or re-experience the conference at any convenient time. It was really an amazing virtual, global, and continuous conversation about future challenges and opportunities for libraries.

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After the word “Library 2.0” was first coined based on the concept of “Web 2.0” during the mid-2000s, the library world seemed to gradually feel a “2.0” fatigue, and many library practitioners started to pause and ask: so what, or then what? After creating these Blog spaces, Facebook pages, and Twitter accounts, are our users making more usage of libraries resources or being engaged more? Right at this time, the Library 2.011 conference was held to revitalize the conversation on a global scale. Bringing researchers and practitioners in all kinds of libraries together to attend a conference is very “2.0” itself because of its virtual and participatory characteristics. Simply by browsing through the long list of session titles, you will be amazed by how many enthusiastic librarians around the world are implementing Library 2.0’s tools and ideas in all different kinds of library settings and creative programs, and trying to engage our users in new ways. The keynote sessions featured researchers from different parts of the world, and were especially inspiring by showing attendants new concepts, theories, and models for thinking and practicing Library 2.0. On the one hand, these ideas are based on detailed investigation of current trends and practices. On the other hand, these theories help us move forward with a clearer vision, framework and guidance. I am going to summarize a few of them in this report and you will notice that the general trend of the Library 2.0 discussion is going beyond a skill and technique focus, and is moving toward broader attitudinal, cultural, social, and humanistic aspects of information usage in a general sense.

Dr. Sandra Hirsh, Professor and Director of the School of Library and Information Science at San Jose State University gave the first opening keynote speech on the topic of “New Career Pathways for Information Professionals in a Library 2.0 World.” Based on the annual job posting studies she led and conducted in the SLIS of San Jose State University, Dr. Hirsh summarized the exciting new opportunities for information professionals in the digital age, both within and outside of library system. Not only are new job titles with new technical expertise seen growing in library settings but librarians are actually equipped with multiple skill sets that are transferable to many other new types of positions in non-library settings. She encouraged library school students and librarians to extend perception of our career both within and beyond libraries by thinking differently about our skills and telling our stories in new ways that are understandable by outsiders. Library 2.0, as one of the particular social media skills that librarians are enthusiastically embracing, in Dr. Hirsh’s point of view, is a valuable skill not just for libraries.

Dr. Hirsh called for an “attitudinal change” as an addition to the traditional understanding of Library 2.0 as simply “technology know-how”. She cited Partridge, Menzies, Lee, and Munro’s study and conceptualized the information professionals’ correct attitude as willing to be a “reflective practitioner who engages in continuous re-examination of actions, services, tools, and needs.” (Partridge et al. 2010) Dr. Hirsh pointed out that in addition to Web 2.0 application skills, metadata standards for digital content, integrated library systems, and teaching/instruction skills are the most desirable new knowledge and experience in the current library job market. However, librarians should also be able to transform our own traditional terminology in new ways to let the industry world know what we value. For example, using terminology such as “metadata” instead

of “cataloging”, “user needs” instead of “reference”, “technical skills” instead of “library system” or “social media expertise” instead of “library outreach”, will help increase our job opportunities outside of libraries. Dr. Hirsh supported her argument by telling the stories of a few successful cases such as that of a brave new librarian who helped create a position for himself as a digital archivist in a top university library by learning through practice while developing best practices for digitization and describing a particular kind of born-digital materials; a newly graduated library school student who adopted the job search strategy of searching by skill match rather than job titles, eventually taking up a position of web production assistant for Adobe Systems Incorporated. Dr. Hirsh sampled many exciting industry job titles that are not under librarians’ normal job searching radar but actually are applying the same skills as we are acquiring: business intelligence analyst; information architect; information specialist; web content manager; usability analyst; digital image control specialist; records management specialist, and other positions that require good social skills. She concluded her speech by quoting Stephen Abrams and saying “LIS skills are good currency in this world – but only for those with the flexibility and insight to exploit the opportunities.”

Dr. Lennart Björneborn, Associate Professor from Royal School of Library and Information Science of Copenhagen, Denmark, presented the second keynote speech on “Participatory Libraries as Enabling Spaces for Creative Practices.” This was the most theoretically rich presentation, which introduced fresh new concepts and models that enabled us to understand how libraries’ roles and users’ information management behaviors happen in all possible physical, digital, and human interactions. Dr. Björneborn succinctly defined “2.0” as “providing more possibilities for creative user activities, including leaving and finding behavioral traces in a given space/interface,” and he argued that the meaning of Library 2.0 is that libraries are playing a more important role in users’ everyday life creativity (Björneborn 2011). He tried to help us understand users’ activities on social media (e.g. tagging, reviewing, recommending, adding, and sharing) as leaving their “behavioral marks or traces,” and actually both libraries’ digital and physical spaces should try to facilitate users’ leaving and finding each other’s behavioral traces, because this “social navigation” or “user-to-user mediation” behaviors are very important for users’ information management.

In terms of information management, Dr. Lennart Björneborn also had developed a new and multi faceted model, including five major aspects/processes: learn/experience/consume/reflect/remember; find/search/explore/discover/select; share/mediate/communicate/disseminate/inspire; store/save/organize/facilitate/structure; and create/produce/edit/remix/copy. Traditional library services have been emphasizing the first three facets, while the Library 2.0 trend has been or should be focusing more on the last two facets of users’ information management needs. Dr. Lennart Björneborn sees physical and human interfaces as no less important than digital space during all of these information processing stages. Not only that, he suggested that libraries’ physical spaces have advantages because it is where users can directly interact with human and physical information resources in

a tangible and face-to-face way, and make full use of human's bodies, mobility, and both spatial and tactile senses. Therefore, Dr. Björneborn said, Library 2.0 is "integrative interfaces 2.0" and we should plan our libraries by designing interfaces that include all contact interfaces between users and information resources- and thinking about all usage potentials of these interfaces in terms of engaging users to participate and interact with each other. It's not that high-tech innovations are the final solutions, low-tech but thoughtful designs, and sometimes mixing and bridging of multiple interfaces can also have great potential for encouraging creative activities. It's not a matter of whether digital or not, libraries are in essence architectures of participation, and users are ideally those who are co-creators and resources equipped with participatory literacy.

Dr. Lennart Björneborn was not too optimistic about the new image of such a participatory library and he did mention all kinds of technical, cognitive, and social-cultural barriers that are hindering users and even librarians to be participatory. Citing Simon's work and her analysis of the "social technographics ladder" (Simon 2010), Dr. Björneborn shared the insightful categorizations of users into information creators, conversationalists, critics, collectors, joiners, spectators, and inactives, and the very last group of users may never participate no matter how well designed the environment. There are also other issues that need to be better addressed and solved, for example, quality control, privacy, and information overload. But a participatory culture should be able to be implemented, and librarians can take responsibility for parts of the work. Dr. Björneborn recommended Jenkins and his colleagues' studies (Jenkins 2009) and pointed out the cultural functions of working on support for creation and sharing, informal mentorship among peers, beliefs about efficacy, and feelings of social connections, which can all be lined up with Library 2.0 innovations.

Dr. Christine Bruce, Professor in the Faculty of Science and Technology of Queensland University of Technology, Australia gave another keynote speech on "the Experience of Information Literacy and Learning: Reflections on Social Media." Librarians are the major group of practitioners whose practices have been largely based on information literacy theory. Dr. Bruce's presentation discussed how Web 2.0 development has been seen first as merely instrumental for acquiring information literacy, and now it is time for this concept to help transform librarians' understanding of information literacy as a process of learning, and the latter can even generate and inspire information's transformative effects within many other social and civic contexts. Dr. Bruce summarized many researchers' unanimous interests in the positive relationship between Web 2.0 and information literacy. Web 2.0 tools can certainly be effective and prominent tools for developing information literacy. But gradually, researchers have been noticing that the deeper meaning of Web 2.0 is symbolizing a new understanding of the nature of information literacy, that is, information literacy itself is a social, collaborative, continuous and creative process of knowledge learning and construction.

If "information literacy" implies some skill sets that are static, rigid and defined by standards, Dr. Bruce asked us to replace that word and study "informed learning" instead (Bruce 2008). There are three further principles of so-called "informed learning": to build, promote, and change,

which are all about users' real experiences of using information in different professional or disciplinary communities. According to Dr. Bruce, if traditional library services have been focused more on resources and skills, now, relationship, situated and transforming are the most important three new dimensions that Web 2.0 has changed our views about all information related activities. Bruce shared interesting case studies outside of the library settings that she conducts with colleagues from Queensland University of Technology, and showed us how these new dimensions have been witnessed and applied in different contexts. A detailed analysis of people's information experience during a flood was conducted to build up a framework of the complex and multiple information needs in an emergent situation, and the framework showed the potential value for assisting government departments to further develop their social media platforms to meet those needs more effectively. Another interesting case study was comparing church as a social community that emphasizes relationship in a lot of physical and spiritual aspects, and social media as a tool, which also emphasizes and even facilitates relationship and community building, and asking the question of how church community has been consciously using social media tools to develop relationships. A new mother's experience with social media was studied, and the result showed extensive and diverse information needs that this particular individual has been going through, from documenting, normalizing, connecting, searching, asking, to sharing all kinds of information. With or without Web 2.0, these information needs are met with completely different mechanisms and with significantly different effects and results. Above all, this "2.0" idea and concept has not only have enlightened libraries' own theoretical bases of information literacy, but also has increased the capacity of librarians to help other professions or disciplines become more effective, prepared and even wiser when using Web 2.0 tools and skills.

Participating in such a global conversation around the topic of Library 2.0 after only 5-6 year's history of the concept itself, I can still sense the continuous life and the contagious effects of it. The applications of the "2.0" tools and strategies have made innovative practices a normal way of working in the library profession, and the spirit of Library 2.0 is even higher rather than fading away. The highlighted keynote speeches reported here are based on both empirical and theoretical studies diligently and vigorously conducted independently in different parts of the world. However, they have all converged at the same point of going beyond the instrumental or technical views of Library 2.0, and working toward richer and multi-faceted frameworks that extend from the cultural, social, and transformative effects of the power of Library 2.0. The more exciting thing is that during the process, it's not just the library's resources and contents that are important to the outside world, but librarians' human and technical skills (along with library research about general information users and related behaviors), that are all becoming increasingly valuable for the world outside of libraries. We have tried hard to attract users to come to us, but now maybe it's now time for librarians to go bravely into the outside world and change others' perceptions about us by showing our unique values and spirit in all kinds of non-library settings.

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